

Beach neighbors fight for their place in the sun



Tribune photos by Chris Walker

Michael Shpigelsky, 68, takes in the sun last week at Ohio Street Beach. Some fear a new building would cast a shadow on the beach. Alex Weinzierl (top photo), 11 months, plays in the sand with his mother, Stephanie, watching nearby.

Ohio Street area residents fear tower will plunge sand into shadow.

By Mickey Ciokajlo
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Lydia East always knew she would lose her view of Lake Michigan.

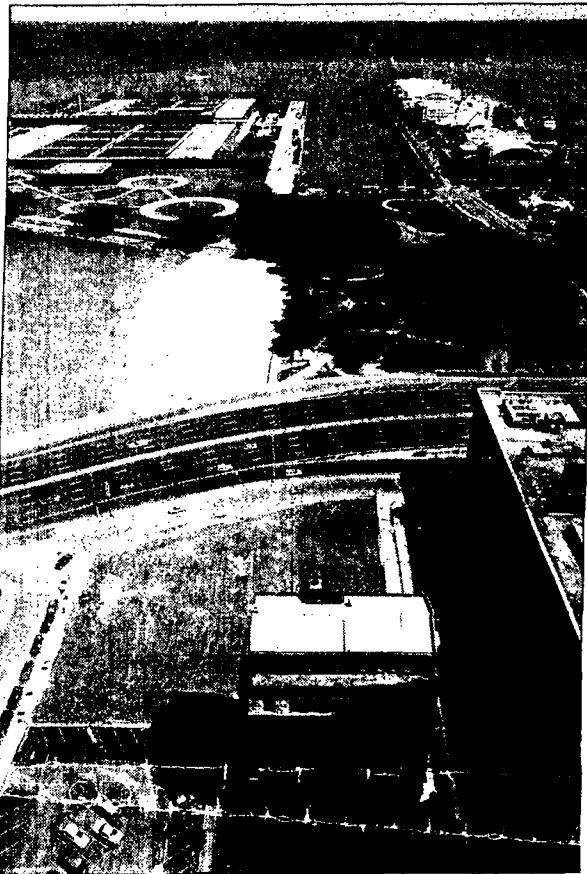
But she didn't think her favorite beach would go with it.

At least that's how she and many Streeterville neighborhood residents feel about a luxury condominium tower that has been proposed for 600 N. Lake Shore Drive. They fear the 49-story building would cast a shadow over Ohio Street Beach in the late afternoon, rendering undesirable the rectangular sandy nub just northwest of Navy Pier.

"It was just a matter of time," said East, who lives on the third floor of a seven-story building next to the site, now a fenced-off scrubby lot of slightly less than 1 acre. "The issue was what was going to be built and what it was going to do to the neighborhood."

The proposal, which has the support of Ald. Burton Natarus (42nd), was approved last month by the City Council's Zoning Committee and the Chicago Plan Commission. However, residents opposed to the project are not giving up.

They have gathered more than 2,000 signatures they



Seen from the west, this vacant lot across from Ohio Street Beach is the proposed site of a condo development.

plan to present to Mayor Richard Daley before the City Council votes Aug. 30 on a zoning change that would clear

the way for the tower.

While residents are concerned that the 252-unit, 544-foot building would increase

traffic on local streets and be out of character with the lakefront, it is the shadow effect on Ohio Street Beach that has become their rallying point.

A Northwestern University doctor who lives nearby and opposes the project estimated that at 3:45 p.m. in mid-July, the building would create a shadow covering at least 70 percent of the beach. Ted Yaghmour, an anesthesiologist, said he used basic mathematics to judge the shadow after he didn't trust the analysis by the building's developer, Chicago-based Atlantis Properties.

As planned, "their building sits right in front of the beach," said Yaghmour, noting the shadow will be cast after the sun is in the west. "It's a direct shot to the beach."

Atlantis Properties Chairman Howard Robinson referred questions to the project's architect, George Pappageorge, who didn't deny the building would create a shadow on the beach. But he said Yaghmour's estimate is exaggerated and stressed that at no time would the entire beach be covered in shadow.

According to Pappageorge's analysis, up to 45 percent of the beach, on its northern portion closest to the Lake Michigan, would be covered by shadow at 4 p.m. on July 21. An hour later, the shadow would have moved to cover the southern half of the beach, he said.

"Is there ever a time when

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Beach

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someone cannot sit in the sun on this beach? No," said Pappageorge, who defended the precision computer-modeling program, which takes into account such factors as time of day, time of year and exact position of the building and the beach. "There's always a place you can be in the sun at this Ohio Street Beach . . . and it's a good proportion of the beach."

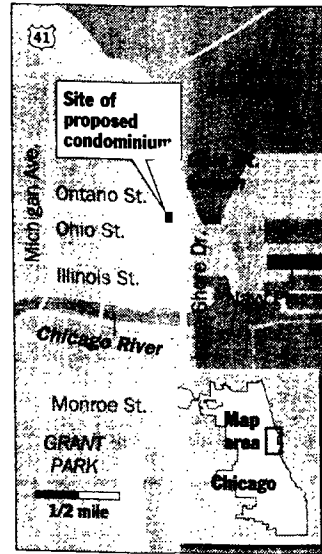
By 6 p.m. shadow from the 60-story Onterie Center at 441 E. Erie St., northwest of the proposed condo tower, covers a majority of the beach, Pappageorge's analysis shows.

But residents are concerned the beach—a favorite of tourists and local families because of its proximity to downtown—the adjacent Jane Addams Park and nearby Navy Pier would be thrown into darkness during prime late-afternoon hours.

Tara Duffy, a neighborhood resident who is involved in the petition drive, said residents are not opposed to development on the property, but they want a shorter building that won't throw such a long shadow.

"No one in our building is asking to protect their view. They don't care about their view," said Tara Duffy, a 12-year neighborhood resident who is involved in the petition drive. "What we're trying to do is save the beach."

Natarus said residents were acting as if they owned the public beach. He said although the building would cast some shadow on the beach, the benefits of cleaning up a lot that has been empty for at least 15 years far outweigh other concerns.



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"We have to clean up our lakefront. It's our showcase," Natarus said. "We can't have vacant lots like this."

If approved as Natarus predicts it will be, the tower's units would range in price from \$800,000 to \$2.25 million. Natarus said a much larger 79-story development was approved for the site in 1986, but it was never built.

Beachcombers soaking up the sun last week said they hoped the condo wouldn't ruin the beach.

"That would be a shame," said Jack Weinzierl, 33, who was visiting from Geneva with his wife and two young sons. "[But] I think it would be tough to fight it. How do you think most of these get built?"

"If it truly would cast a shadow," said Weinzierl's wife, Stephanie, "that would stink."



Tribune photo by Chris Walker

Celia Woldt, 4, admires a ladybug on her thumb that she found while playing in the sand at Ohio Street Beach last week.